



January 12, 2010

Chairman Julius Genachowski
Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: GN Docket No. 09-191

Dear Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners:

If there is a more effective, powerful tool than the Internet for connecting African Americans with cultural assets, opening doors to a wide array of opportunities and stimulating greater civic engagement, I would appreciate knowing what it is.

The YMI Cultural Center can trace its roots back more than a century, to when George Vanderbilt recognized the unique culture and needs of the African American craftsmen building the Biltmore House and commissioned construction of a 19,000-square-foot facility for their use. Today, the YMI is the most enduring African American socio-cultural institution in Western North Carolina.

For African Americans, and especially those in rural parts of our state, broadband access is the single most crucial tool for empowerment. Access to broadband Internet means access to educational and training resources, increased communication and many products and services not otherwise available. Unfortunately, for those lacking access to broadband Internet services, opportunities are lost and connections are missed.

Over the years, minority participation in the Internet ecosystem has been increasing and we are pleased with the results. Today, the Internet is the tool for empowerment. African Americans, particularly African American youth, can simply not compete effectively without high speed Internet service. I applaud the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") for taking steps to encourage universal access and adoption of broadband. It is vital to keeping our youth connected and empowered.



"We Celebrate Culture!"


YMI Cultural Center • 39 South Market Street • P.O. Box 7301 • Asheville, NC 28801 • Office: 828.252.4614 • Fax: 828.257.4539 • ymicc1@aol.com • www.ymicc.org

The Administration's efforts to encourage broadband deployment across the nation are admirable. But let's be realistic: it is the private sector who will build, maintain and improve these networks. We cannot encourage deployment on the one hand while discouraging private investment with the other.

As you consider the Open Internet proceeding, I hope you will keep in mind that even in tough economic times, the communication companies have continued to invest – creating jobs in their industries, providing platforms for additional good jobs in our communities, and delivering products and services consumers use daily.

I understand that certain open Internet standards are in place today and, from everything I can see in Western North Carolina, they have proven quite effective. Perhaps I'm influenced by working in a 118-year-old building listed as a National Historic Landmark, but if what we have is working well, why the need to change?

Sincerely,



Harry Harrison
Executive Director